

The Herald
Tropic

December 28, 1986



The Tropic Calendar5

Congratulations! You are now the proud owner of the 1987 Tropic Calendar, part Sunday magazine, part New Year's gift. In addition to many of our regular features, we have devoted 24 pages to create a 12-month wall calendar.

Step one: How to operate your new wall calendar.

The 1987 Tropic Calendar takes advantage of the latest in wall calendar technology. It is quite simple to install and operate. Place the first five pages of the magazine between thumb and forefinger, revealing the colorful original art and the grid-type calendar for the month of January. Let the magazine dangle sideways, so the grid is closest to the floor. Pin or nail to the wall. When January passes by, flip up the page to reveal "February," and so on.

Step two: There is no step two.

The Tropic Calendar is designed as a practical essay on the tumble of the seasons. We have commissioned artists and writers to search for the meaning we all intuitively feel in the turning of the calendar pages and the cycling of the moon. The result is 12 original images, and 12 mini-essays, all inspired by the subtle, sometimes mysterious distinctions that set each month apart. We have noted some important dates in the appropriate spaces, leaving plenty of room for you to note some important dates of your own. Happy New Year.

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Advertising: (305) 376-2706 Represented by Knight-Ridder Newspaper Sales, Inc., and Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers Inc. Contents of Tropic © 1986 by The Miami Herald Publishing Co.

All manuscript submissions should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. We are not responsible for manuscripts or photos. Allow six weeks for reply.

LEARNING HOW TO FALL

Guest columnist Peter Rittner, of Miami, was the winner of this year's year-end column contest. His manuscript was judged the best of 151 entries.

Mayer hurled himself outward, plummeted seven stories howling at his wife, his unborn son, his neighbors, at anyone who could hear, and slammed into a concrete square, his naked body splayed in the center of the tenement courtyard, still at last, undisturbed until a perfumed, polka-dot handkerchief drifted from the balcony above, billowed open, settled and laid his vacant face to rest. Of course, that's probably not how it happened.

No matter how many times Norman recounted his father's suicide, it was always an awful secret shared for the first time, sometimes spun out like the terrible tale of an entranced eyewitness, sometimes wrenched out by a horrified son, so immediate it seemed to have happened yesterday. Every time Norman told the story, I believed him completely. Every time, the story was completely different.

I don't know a sane soul whose memories aren't crafted; that's how we keep our lives in order, the way we all play God. So, Norman contrived to corner his anger, somehow to cage the chaos Mayer had left behind. Night after night, we conjured a mythical world in which Norman refracted images of abandonment, performing magic, an illusionist at work with mirrors, light and diversions, entralling me, his willing audience. Those evenings were nothing more, or less, than enactments of madness: one inmate divulging his delusions to another, both safe in the asylum, both hanging on to dear life.

Myths, even personal myths, have a way of unfolding, dreamily, in the subconscious, until suddenly their hidden intent is so apparent it seems impossible they could even have meant anything else. Now, more than 17 years later, it's obvious that Norman's compulsion was simply to remember something that never was: a father who struggled to the very end, fighting all the way down. Like the punched-out, beat-up boxer pulling himself to his feet one last time, only to be knocked down again, for good. Like the used-up marathon runner weaving, half out of her mind, to the finish line, dragging herself the last few yards, and losing. Heroism in defeat; the Code of the Western World demands it.

I could use a little of that heroism now. This has been a discouraging year. I was laid off from a job about which I cared. Last month I turned 40. Then there's my health.

Last spring my wife Barbara finally convinced me to consult a doctor about the frequent fatigue, constant joint pains and general lassitude which had become an unwelcome, but regular part of my life. Several weeks of expensive poking and probing ensued. Even my gait was analyzed; the physical therapist walking me up and down a hall while she muttered and made notes. I imagined myself a thoroughbred racehorse, damaged, but still magnificent and valuable. The examinations and tests concluded, the doctor told Barbara and me, in short, that 33 years after contracting polio, despite the support of my braces and crutches, I was beginning to wear out; that I needed to be more aware of my limitations; that I had to start to making some physical compromises. I was relieved. Barbara was appalled. How could I not be more upset? In all the years she'd known me, I'd accepted the constraints of my disability with extreme reluctance. I guess she didn't realize I'd practiced my response long ago at the Roosevelt School for handicapped children in Miami.

"You kids on crutches know you fall a lot. You got to learn how to fall and not get hurt. I want you to line up 'long these here mats and fall. When you're down, you got to figure a way to get back up. Crawl. Use your crutches like ladders. Use whatever's handy. Just climb up any way you can. If you can't figure no way up, I'll help you. But first you got to try. When you're back up, fall again. Don't be scared. You won't get hurt. That's what the mats are for. And I'm here to help you. If you get tired of doing this, or don't like it, just remember one of these days you'll fall and there won't be no mats and nobody to help. So, this is real important. And you boys, you be special careful so's you protect your valuables. Know what I mean?"

Getting from here to there requires orientation and motion. Some of us struggle to live; some struggle against death. Maybe the distinction is insignificant; after all, we all end up in the same place. I do know this: I learned my lessons well. I keep falling, crawling and getting up — any way I can, even if I have to make my own myths, then learn to believe in them.

It's not easy, but the choice is simple, really: Norman's way, or Mayer's. Life as it is, or nothing at all.



Honorable mentions to: Suzanne A. Solomon, Key Biscayne; Vivian Morgan Corli, Fort Lauderdale; Claudia Boggs, Coral Gables, Michelle Dibble, Miami.

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BEWARE THE PUFFALUMP!



It is time once again for Concerned Citizens to examine the Issues and seek to bring about Meaningful Change by writing postal cards.

The No. 1 issue facing us right now, of course, is the issue of exactly what we, as a nation, should call the spider in the song about the spider who went up the water spout, after which down came the rain and washed the spider out. I always thought the correct name was the "Inky Dinky" spider, but, recently, when I conducted a scientific survey on this in my newspaper office, I was shocked at the wide variety of responses people gave, such as: the "Hinky Dinky" spider; the "Eensy Beensy" spider; the "Eensy Weensy" spider; the "Itty Bitty" spider; the "Itsy Bitsy" spider; the "For God's sake, Barry, some of us are trying to do productive work" spider, etc. So I had my large research staff call Directory Assistance, and they told him it was the (for heaven's sake) "Hokey Dokey" spider.

This is bad. We are heading down the Road to Anarchy. It is only a matter of time before small children are singing about the "Earl A. Ruckmaster Jr. Prosthetic Device Company" spider. Something needs to be done, and that something is: federal legislation. I am urging you to decide what you think the spider's name should be, then write it down on a post card and send it to: Committee for an Official National Waterspout Spider Name, c/o Doris, The Miami Herald, Miami, FL. 33132-1693. Our highly skilled committee staff, consisting of Doris, will count your votes, and once we have a consensus we'll see if we can't

find a congressman deranged enough to sponsor a law about this, involving lengthy prison terms for violators. Get those postcards in the mail today! This offer void in space.

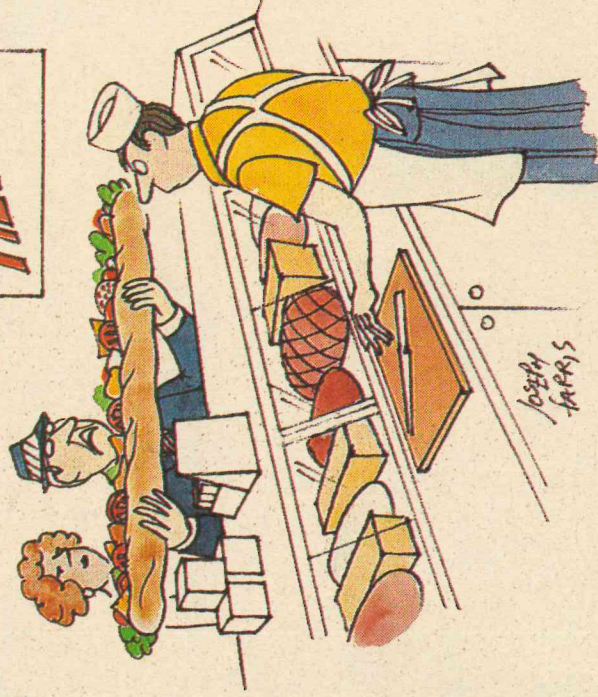
Speaking of which, our next Issue was brought to my attention by Daniel Bloom, a columnist for the Capital City Weekly in Juneau, Alaska, who writes under the name "Lienad Moolb" (which, backwards, spells "Hunchback of Notre Dame").

Moolb is extremely upset that in maps of the United States, Alaska is almost always shown in a little box off the coast of southern California. He feels this is very misleading, and I have to agree: Until he set me straight, I myself thought Alaska was in a little box off the coast of southern California. In fact, it's way up near Canada somewhere, which is why Moolb is hoping to attract a large national following via his map campaign so he can get the hell out. You can help. Send a postcard to your map company (What do you mean: "I don't have a map company"? Get one, dammit!) telling them you want to see Alaska where it belongs. Also, if you send a picture postcard of your city or state to Moolb at P.O. Box 555, Auke Bay, Alaska, 99821, he'll send YOU a picture postcard of Alaska. Things are slow, in Auke Bay.

This leads us to another map-related issue, which is the need to have the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers paint giant borderlines and names on the states so you can tell where you are when you're up in an airplane. I think this would be really helpful. Like, if you flew over a humongous black "O," and then maybe 50 miles later you came to an "H," you'd know that you were either flying eastbound over western Ohio or westbound over central Oklahoma. Of course, some of the northeastern states, the eensy beensy ones such as Delaware, won't have enough room, so their names will have to be floated in the Atlantic Ocean somehow, with long lines pointing to them. Also it

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"I'm going to write to my congressman. This six-foot hero sandwich is only 5 feet 10 inches."

might be helpful to put giant stars on the state capitals, and maybe even paint the states different colors. This could really add some sparkle to a state such as, for example, Nebraska, which, from what I can tell, flying over at 37,000 feet drinking a Bloody Mary, is mostly dirt.

Our final issue concerns me greatly, because it involves a company that all of us parents have come to know and trust: Fisher-Price. This is the company that makes wonderful and totally indestructible toys for preschool children, featuring little farms and towns populated by little people who have no arms or legs so they can pass easily and safely through a preschool child's digestive system. Over the years I have developed a deep respect for the people at Fisher-Price, which is why I was appalled recently to receive a

press kit from them announcing that they are coming out with a new set of licensed characters called — get your airsickness bags ready — "The Puffalumps." These are, of course, your standard little stuffed wads of cuteness that your child is supposed to hug and cherish at upwards of \$20 per wad. I know what you parents are thinking. You're thinking: "Just what we need! Another lovable batch of licensed characters, each Sold Separately! Ha ha! Where is the gin?" If you have any postcards left, I think you should send the folks at Fisher-Price (East Aurora, N.Y., 14052-1885) a personal message thanking them and suggesting some fun things they could do with "The Puffalumps."

OK, citizens. You know what to do; now get off your behinds and do it. Then get back on your behinds. ■

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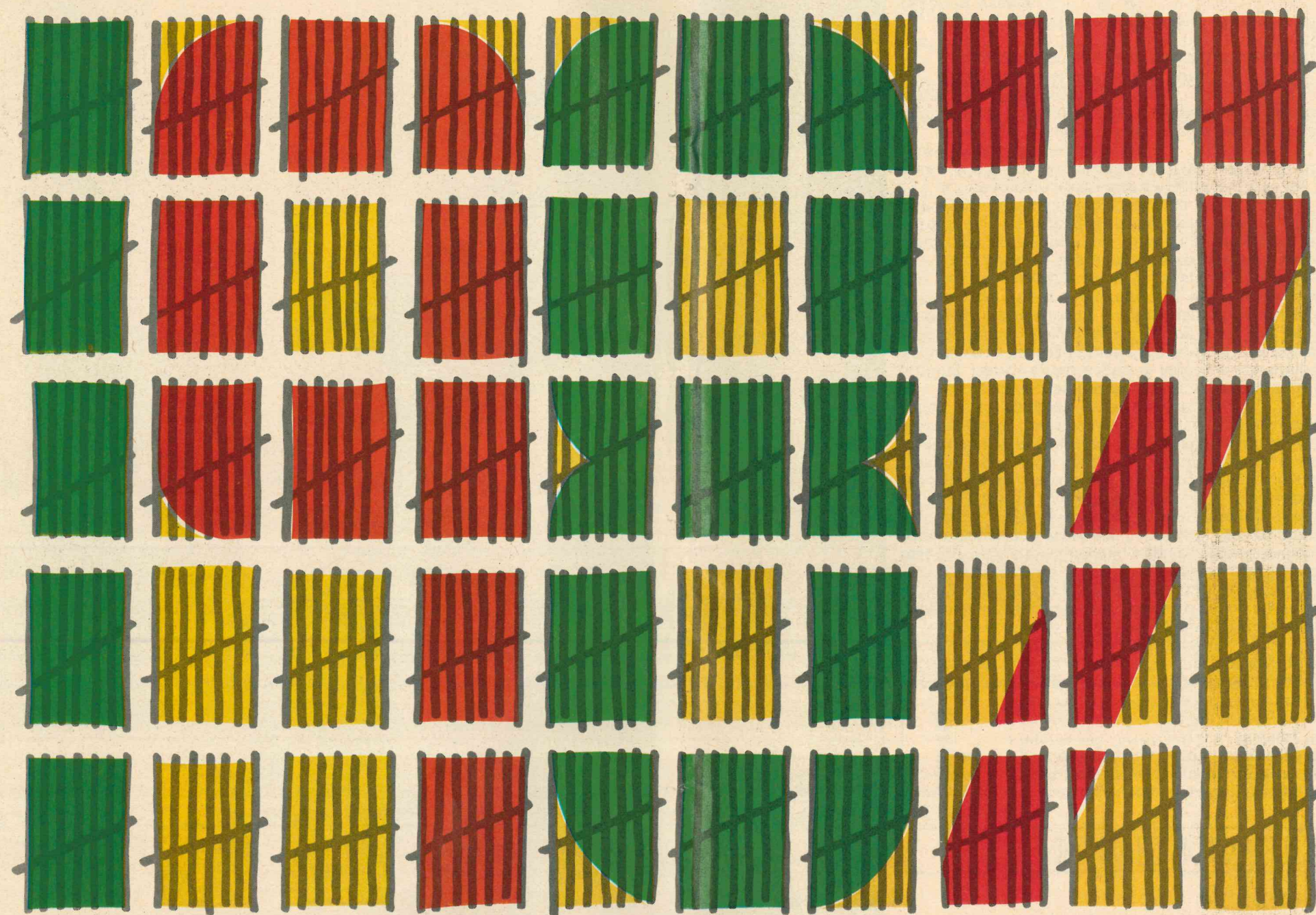
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TROPIC CALENDAR

PINKY

1987
TROPIC

GENE WEINGARTEN

For the half dozen who witnessed it, the accident must have been spectacular, the sort of grotesquerie that becomes forever frozen in the mind's eye. Ten-ton truck, skidding out of control on an icy road, barreling broadside toward a small car trying to rock itself out of a snowdrift. Terrified driver leaps from car, attempts flight. A brief, comical scramble for footing, a *danse macabre*. The explosion of impact, car and driver cartwheel through the air.

For me, there is only this: the bang of metal on metal (it is a bang, not a crunch), the icy rush of wind on my face, flailing, flailing, scudding to a stop along a curb. A woman's scream.

It was the New Year's Eve weekend, 1978. I left the hospital that day with a swollen jaw, a spider web of bruises, and no real comprehension of what had happened. That would come a few days later, when I awoke to the new year with a memory — a terrible, accurate, unshakable memory — of the moment before the ambulance arrived, as I lay in the road, black galoshes inches from my face, slush dangling from the buckles, voices dangling, bruised truck on one side of me, ruined car on the other. That was the thing: I was *between* the truck and my car. My car had rolled — no, bounced — up and over me.

I have always believed January an impostor. It begins nothing. Nature's year begins in March; a schoolkid's in September; a baseball fanatic's in April. These are logical first months, worthy beginnings. January is nothing like that, it is merely a continuation of winter, comprehensible as a first month only to accountants and others who worship the arbitrary.

But *that* January, January 1979, that was different.

The nighttime sky shimmered with mystery and grandeur. A man could get lost in it, out there in the blackness in his back yard, sitting cross-legged on the hood of his car, captivated and humbled, oblivious to the bitter cold.

A raw tomato, eaten like a Macintosh, was the finest meal a man could want. How could I have not noticed its pebbly sour-sweet perfection before?

A stranger's cigarette butt, hurled from a car window at night, became a thing of beauty, exploding on the road in a tiny, magnificent fire shower.

A man can taste water, if he tries.

A man can taste a woman without touching her, if he tries.

It lasted several weeks, this sense of wonderment. Then it began to weaken.

I tried desperately to hold on to it, but there was no use. Some things cannot be willed; they must be earned.

It slipped away, with January.

And — God help me — never returned.



ILLUSTRATION BY LISA ADAMS

J A N U A R Y

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

DECEMBER
s m t w t f s
1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12 13
14 15 16 17 18 19 20
21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31

FEBRUARY
s m t w t f s
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28

New Year's Day

1 2 3

4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Art Deco Weekend Begins

Pig Bowl IV

11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Martin Luther King's Birthday

Three Kings Parade

18 19 20 21 22 23 24

José Martí Day

25 26 27 28 29 30 31

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1987

TROPIC

BILL MICHELMORE

My ex-wife threw the photo albums down the incinerator. That's the effect I have on women — I leave scars. She simply incinerated nine years of our lives. I could never have done that, no matter how much I hated. The soft white leather of the albums themselves would have been enough to stop me, let alone the pictures, the irreplaceable pictures. I treasure memories. No amount of bitterness can erase them. I hoard mementos and letters and photographs like a miser running out of time.

We had been so close. We'd actually believed our marriage would last a lifetime. That's what the photo albums were for — to keep a record, to maintain that sense of personal history, that continuity.

It was in the dead of winter, the middle of February, that my ex-wife told me what she had done. To keep her sanity she had obliterated every memory of me and our life together, every image, every photograph. After the divorce and after she turned the pictures into ashes, my ex-wife went back to the Catholic Church. Now, in her barren apartment, there are only pictures of Christ.

My first impulse was to write her a terrifying letter saying that she would burn in hell for what she had done. It seemed a poetic and just thing to say. How dare she take what was at least half mine and toss it down the incinerator chute. No chance for retrieval there.

I relayed the whole story to my mother, telling her in a most dramatic fashion, with full emphasis on the word "incinerated." She put on a reflective face and said, "That poor girl, how you must have hurt her. I think I'll write her a letter."

My girlfriend tells me to forget about it. "Stop brooding," she says, "make a new life with me and we'll make new pictures." That's the answer, of course. Accept my loss and get on with a new chapter. Quit sifting through a fading memory like a father searching for his long lost children, trying to recall every detail of a photograph of my mother visiting our little family one northern winter, or of my young son and me taken at Niagara Falls. That was a great one. I can see it in my mind, but I don't have it. I don't have it.

Naturally I never wrote that letter. But, when I was in the neighborhood, I knocked on her door and condemned her to her face. And then I gave her a sob story about how one day I would have made my own albums with those photos; I would have had them when I was old and alone inside a small house on a cold day in February, maybe on Valentine's Day, listening to the comforting din of rain on the roof, turning the pages, studying the photographs as though each was an important piece of history, of my heart, as they would have been had they survived.

My ex-wife turned toward the picture of Christ. From



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK VAN EPPS

behind it, she removed a small photograph. She handed it to me. It was the picture of my son and me at Niagara Falls. "I was keeping this blessed," she said. "But you take it. There's only this one, I'm afraid."

She stood there in that same apartment with the furniture we had picked out together years ago now draped with covers to hide the wear and tear of those hard, lonely years. I suddenly saw her pain. And I think I understood her strange act of hiding that one photograph — that solitary

souvenir of lost love — in a special place. The bitterness left me. Tentatively, I put my arms around her and remembered how much we once meant to each other. She remembered, too. I told her to put the photo back, that I would rather have it there than kicking around in my overnight bag, a vagabond like me. I'm not a religious man, but it felt OK for that photograph, that lone survivor, to be in that place. That's what I wanted and that's what I told her, and, while she readjusted the picture of Christ, I slipped out the door.



F E B R U A R Y

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	Miami Film Festival Begins	7
8	9 Washington's Birthday	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday	13	14 Coconut Grove Arts Festival Begins Valentine's Day
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Vizcaya Arts Festival Begins
22	23	24	25	26 Doral Ryder Open Begins	27	28 Miami Grand Prix Begins
					JANUARY s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	MARCH s m t w t f s .1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

Doral Ryder Open 
 February 26 - March 1, 1987

1987

TROPIC

JOHN DORSCHNER

The announcement on the sports page, a single succinct line, told me everything I needed to know:
 Braves at Red Sox — Winter Haven, 2 p.m.
 It was 10 on a Saturday morning, the first day of spring baseball, and immediately I started calculating. A four-hour drive one way, eight hours round trip, just to see a three-hour baseball game.

But the March sun felt young and warming. A breeze was fluttering through the windows, bringing with it springtime whiffs of hope. My valiant Atlanta Braves had finished a miserable last in their division the previous year, but they were supposed to have several pitching "prospects" and a promising rookie catcher. It was a time for beginnings, time for a pilgrimage.

It took two minutes to find my Braves cap, 10 minutes to put gas in the car, and I was on my way, up U.S. 27 through the heart of the state. I raced past rumbling semis and mud-splattered pickups, taking absurd chances. After an hour, my enthusiasm waned. It was crazy to waste half a day, grinding my teeth over traffic. Better to have stayed home and drunk beer in the back yard.

As I pulled into the parking lot of Chain O'Lakes Park, I saw the scoreboard. Disaster! The first half-inning was already over. Exhausted, hot and angry, I ran, gasping for air, through a small tunnel leading to the stands behind first base.

When I emerged in the sunlight, seeing the bright, almost luminous green rectangle of the field below, my mood changed instantly. This was . . . *perfect*.

Beyond the right-field wall was a grove of orange trees, tops rippling in the gentle winds. Below, the Braves fielders seemed frozen in time, hunched forward, hands on knees, waiting for the next pitch. My heart slowed, the breathing calmed.

I found a seat just past first base. Below me were a couple of Red Sox fans, sprawled back, elbows resting on the bleacher seats behind them, their shirts off, flabby pink bellies aimed sunward. They were talking about Ted Williams' eating habits.

Off to my right was a slender young black woman with two small children. She had an interior design magazine in her lap, but her time was spent keeping track of her scrambling, crawling, giggling kids. She rarely glanced at the field.

Maybe she had the right idea, because right off the bat the Red Sox sluggers began pummeling the Braves' pitching hopes for the new season. First came Rick Matula, the "rookie phenom" that I had read about. He lasted an inning. He was followed by a succession of sad-faced baseball mortals. Pretty soon, the score was 9-0.

The first day of spring baseball, and my hopes were already dying. I slumped in my seat, munched peanuts and listened to the tales of the two pink-bellied men. They were Boston sportswriters, it turned out, and about the middle of the sixth, they fell into a bitter dispute about whether Ted Williams had slightly altered his batting stance after returning from World War II.

In the bottom of the sixth, the young mother suddenly leaned forward, raising a tiny fist. "Come on, Bobby," she shouted, waving at the Red Sox batter who was striding toward the plate.

Bobby was tall and gaunt, and he wore one of those outrageously high numbers on his back that meant he was a minor-leaguer with virtually no chance of making the team.

The mother pressed her two kids to her, huddling uncertainly against the future.



ILLUSTRATION BY VERONICA GARCIA

Bobby took a pitch. A ball. He took another pitch. Strike.

"Oooo," the woman moaned, as if she had been hit in the stomach.

Next pitch, Bobby scratched a bloop single to right. As he settled onto first base, the woman whooped wildly, but Bobby simply hunched forward, hands on knees, casually studying the pitcher.

The next inning, the Braves scored several runs, and in the eighth they struck for several more. My hope surged back. In the ninth, Peppy Frias, the new

shortstop, got a hit, and so did a baby-faced catcher named Bruce Benedict. Score: 9-8. Two on, two out.

At that moment, alas, a relief pitcher came in and put out the fire. The young mother gathered up her kids and walked down the ramp, humming. I imagined she was dreaming of big-league salaries and a new home in the suburbs.

I, too, was happy. Maybe the Braves' pitching hadn't improved, but the hitting certainly looked promising. I left clinging to wisps of hope, for it was only March after all, when hope is all there is.

M A R C H

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday Ash Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday Carnaval Miami Begins
1 Orioles Open Spring Training In Miami	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 St. Patrick's Day	11	12 Miami Youth Fair Begins	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Las Olas Arts Festival Begins
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31			<p>FEBRUARY</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p>	<p>APRIL</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28 29 30</p>



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TROPIC

JOEL ACHENBACH

Old buddies hit town in spring, until they get married. These are not socialites — they are just animals. For the serious party fiend, spring is not flowers and butterflies and sunshine. It's Spring Break. It's night. It's dance-floor sweat. It's Miami in April, feeding trough for sensual hungers. Old buddies call from the airport and within hours are puking from your balcony.

One April, I meet Bentley and Beave at the pink bar near Concourse B. A week in Jamaica has given them a bold, diabolical glow, and, in their manner, the way they down the whiskey, the aggression with the waitress, I see the ultraviolet madness that comes with too much sun and too much freedom. Bentley is a homeboy, city-wise but country-flavored, thick-necked and intelligent. Beave is like a contained war, a thunderous explosion of a Southerner with a face so searing red it could only be the synergy of sunshine and booze. Beave's daddy is a famous man, once a Jimmy Carter aide, widely regarded as swine. I like Beave right off for his failure to be boring, but I feel a secondary tug of dread: These, of course, are evil rich kids, a couple of overfed life-sucking Confederates, proud to be louts, reveling in their utter despicableness as they guzzle whiskey in the airport bar.

"We were naked for an entire week!" Beave says.

"It's Jamaica, no problem," says Bentley.

"Where we were, no one wore clothes. We'd walk right up to the girls and buy a drink. And you know, you can't burn your — . It just can't be done!"

They laugh. I say, "Hey, keep it down." They exchange a glance and say in unison, "It's Jamaica, no problem."

Their judgment is so feeble they decide to lie to the airline about some complex emergency and stay in Miami another 24 hours, the real world of work be damned. It's April, after all. Soon we're on the way to Joe's Stone Crab, Beave nursing a bottle of Jack Daniels. He pounds me on the shoulder as he talks, and, finally, I tell him to stop. "I understand, I understand, it's OK, I won't touch you," he says with exaggerated kindness.

At the restaurant, Beave gets a drink and homes in on two elegant ladies at the bar. He tells them what he learned as a naked man. "It just will not burn!" he shouts. Next to Beave I feel ridiculously sane and cautious. Bentley, poor guy, is traversing both worlds. I feel a tug of dread.

Suddenly Beave is shouting: "Yessir I know exactly who you are and I will tell you right now to your face that you are a son of a —."

He had met one of daddy's old enemies (so many to choose

The elegant ladies, to my horror, appear during the middle of the meal and sit in the laps of Beave and Bentley. The vulgarian routine had scored big. Beave tells obscene jokes, and the ladies show the roofs of their mouths, they're laughing so hard. The Joe's waiter arches an eyebrow but remains stoic otherwise. Someone produces a camera and snaps a

confer. Beave whispers that they're both married but are traveling without their husbands and want roommates for the night.

"This is a little too wild for me," I say.

Beave and Bentley go to the ladies' table. I eat stone crabs alone. The waiter looks at me as though I'm some kind of poster child. I want to laugh but all I can think of is a simple phrase: "It's Jamaica, no problem."



ILLUSTRATION BY MARCIA STIEGER

A P R I L

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
MARCH s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	MAY s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Palm Sunday		Passover				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Easter Sunday						
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



"JIMMY AND STEVE IN THE MORNING"
MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY, 6:00 AM-10:00 AM



1987

TROPIC

MICHELLE GENZ

Think of June, July and August, and you may hate May for letting in the summer. May is spring boiled over and burnt, the siren of summer's miseries. But taken alone, set apart, May is disarming. A tropical vacation. I have grown to forgive it.

Once, at 19, I felt May with the skin of a newcomer, and it made me move away. I was coming home, interrupting the only real, seasonal spring I had ever seen, the spring of Van Gogh and Cézanne in southern France — flowering almond trees and peach trees, and irises and lilies, illuminated with the legendary flickering light of Provence. Returned home, I stepped into the equally legendary blaze of Florida's summer. I hit the tarmac and wilted; the sun weighed more than my luggage.

The symptoms of my lethargy took on physical forms. My ankles swelled mysteriously; my hair went wild; I couldn't take enough showers. Apathetic one moment, argumentative the next, I could not face the wad of wet heat that was home.

It was a very slow recovery. The following May, when I finished college, still in Florida and still undone by it, I moved north.

Seven years later, I am a native again. I watch the tourists vacate, then I take May as a private showing of the best of summer. May is the change of season that only honed Floridian sensibilities can perceive, the end of six months of spring, the start of six months of suffering.

Most years, it hits me at the beach, where there are only locals again, and I allow the sun to stun me. It is a willing submission, and only because the sensation is new. I try to read, then shake the grains of sand from the binding of my book and close it, my sacrifice to the sun whose glare erased its pages. Arms crossed under my face, I breathe in the nutmeat scent of my own skin baking unprotected in the sun. The penetrating heat kneads my muscles, and I choose not to squint away the scintillating waves of light.

For the brief time that is May, I can say I've missed it, this broiling sun that pares us down to next to nothing, strips us with uncivilizing heat. Barefoot in 7-Elevens, shirtless in grocery stores, sockless, stockingless. I remember the French laughing us out of town that long-ago May as we walked to our country picnic in Florida-faded cut-offs. The sun has turned us unpretentious, a happy classless band of hedonists, we Floridians, for whom a cold beer at midday becomes essential therapy.

But another month of this, and the thought of the same



ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE LYONS

beer brings on a headache, the sweet smell of hot skin turns acrid and distasteful, the shining browned paunch facing me at the check-out has me dreaming, like the French, of civilization and three-piece suits. By June, the pretty parasols of impatiens, coral, pink, fuchsia, that flourished under the sprinklers of thunderstorm-less May, are bared

and show their naked joints like the legs of spiders, and only desperate marigolds survive. The pavement scalds bare feet red, and lawns soaked by summer's afternoon downpours are parched brown again by the next day.

So it is the deceptively sweet first bite of a bitter persimmon. May. Would that it were also the last.

M A Y

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

<p>APRIL</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28 29 30</p>	<p>JUNE</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6</p> <p>7 8 9 10 11 12 13</p> <p>14 15 16 17 18 19 20</p> <p>21 22 23 24 25 26 27</p> <p>28 29 30</p>					
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	Memorial Day					
31	25	26	27	28	29	30

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1987

TROPIC

MADELEINE BLAIS

I refused to be a June bride. Something about the month, a certain official sweetness, like beauty queen smiles, made it wrong for me. June is a rose and not a calla lily, June is the beach at noon and not at night.

I am the minority. Even in the tropics, when every month is foliage-rich and full of fragrance, June has a cheerleader's popularity. There are still lots of girls for whom the obviousness of June, its wholesome beauty, the way it guarantees spring even in a year and a climate when spring is wayward and late, is the perfect choice. For them, June is not cliché, it is endorsement. When brides-to-be ask my advice, I say be bold, be renegade, show a sense of mystery and cunning, pick a month, any month, just not that one. June is for . . . for . . . virgins.

And if, after I've said that, the betrothed does not wilt but instead wants more advice, I instantly metamorphose into a chatterbox. I brim with back-in-the-dorm wisdom.

If the wedding is big, I say, invite everybody, including people who want to be there more than you want them there. Life is short. Also, don't fret over the food. It doesn't really matter. The champagne does. Not the quality. The quantity.

groom should delegate all duties. No matter what anyone asks, say no. Don't say why.

Resist the temptation to involve any child under the age of 5 in the ceremony in any integral way. The idea is cute in theory only.

Many people resist marriage for many years because they are concerned about being embarrassed by relatives, a grandmother who drools or an uncle who persists in taking nickels out of your ear. The person you are absolutely certain is going to embarrass you never does.

But someone will, often the person you least suspect. So don't worry about it.

Indulge the bride. Why? Because a bride is not who you think she is, not a beloved daughter, or loyal sister, or dear old friend. A bride is a normal woman temporarily converted into a psychotic fury, a totally unhinged feminine principle who is energized by latent ancient forces that concern the domestication of the species. Her every insane whim is the law of the day, even if she makes her attendants wear form-fitting chartreuse tube dresses that turn them into mincing cucumbers.

Accept all free offers to take pictures from anyone with a camera. These photos will later become your only source of information about almost everything that happens on the big day. This is because the bride and

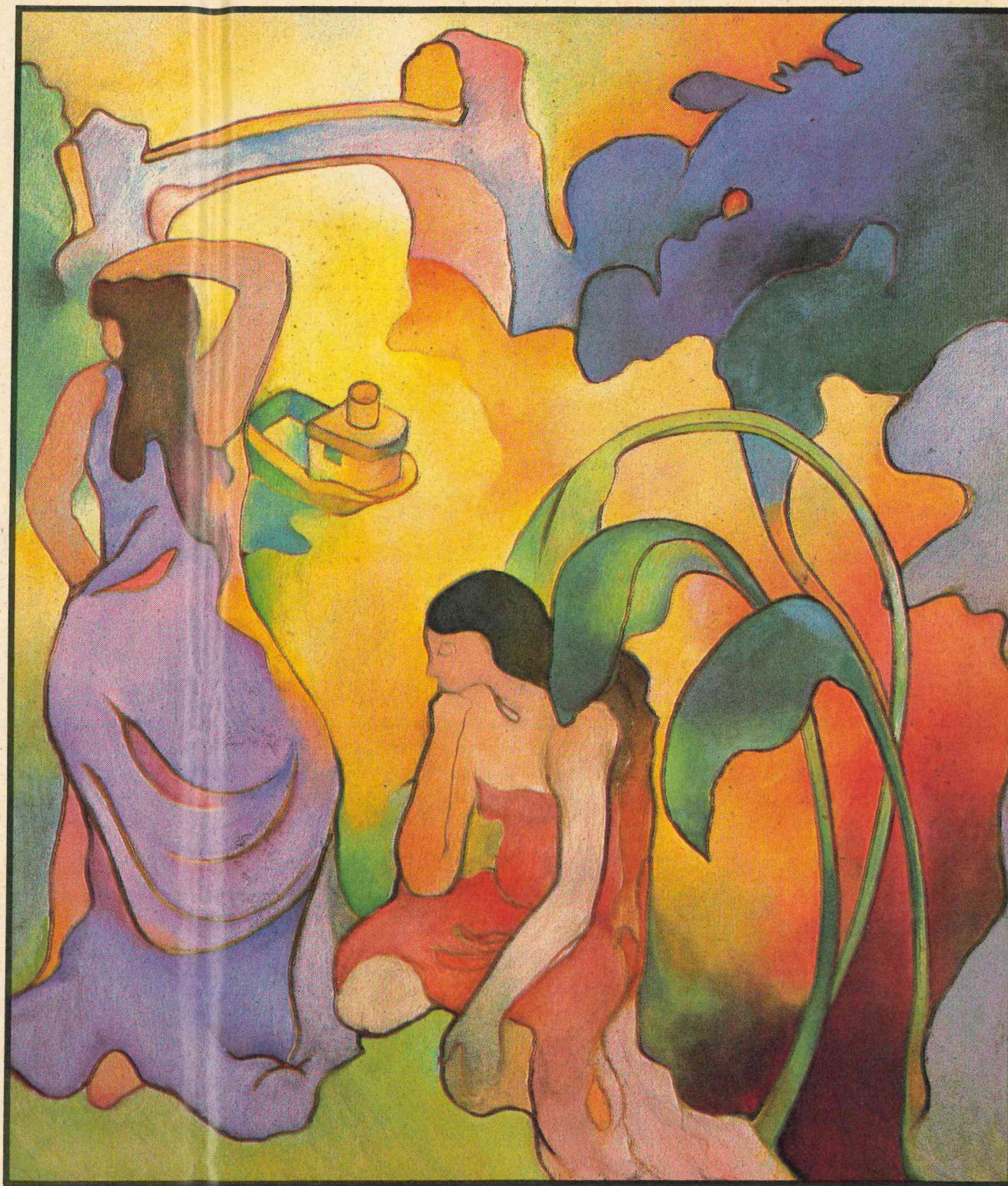


ILLUSTRATION BY TOM MUHL

disappointing and almost out-of-body sense of not being at the event, of being surrounded by too many people with too little time to talk to them. Of course, the best parties at a wedding are usually the ones that occur afterward. These parties are most favored by the people at the wedding who have spent the entire

get married or stay so. At any self-respecting wedding, relationships are launched, or ruined, or both.

Do not keep any gifts you hate. They will turn out to be indestructible. Never put a bride and groom on top of the cake. They belong on top of each other.

J U N E

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

				Miami Boat Show Begins	Goombay Festival Begins	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30			<div> MAY s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div>	<div> JULY s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div>

T R O P I C

1 • 9 • 8 • 7

1987

TROPIC

PHIL TAYLOR

I believe in insane heat. By that I mean not just that weather can become insanely hot, but that there is a certain heat that carries with it a germ for insanity. I have seen madness from time to time, and it has always come in that kind of heat. That is why July was always vaguely threatening in my Brooklyn neighborhood. It was the month that bridged the change from refreshing warmth to intense heat. Insane heat.

I remember lying in bed on a July night as a child, window open in vain hope of a breeze, and hearing first a rap on the door and then whispers downstairs. I went to the head of the stairs, and, before my parents could shoo me back to bed, I saw the man who had come for help, the front of his shirt soaked red from his stab wound. The next morning I saw the stains on the front porch, and I heard my mother talk about how this heat was setting folks crazy.

Every July, the neighbors swapped stories about the horrors of the Fourth, about the kids who had lost eyes and fingers and toes in accidents with firecrackers. Crazy, those kids must be crazy to play with those things, they said. And so every July began with a warning not to play with firecrackers, and more often than not, I obeyed.

That was why on the Fourth of July I remember most clearly, I was not behind Kaye's convenience store setting off cherry bombs with my friends. I was in front of my house, waiting for the ice cream truck, when I looked up and saw a man running down the street with a brown cloth bag in his hand. His hair was matted to his forehead, and his chest was shiny with sweat.

I looked back down the street and saw a policeman in pursuit, gun drawn. He was fat, and as he drew closer I could hear him struggling for breath, as though the hot, heavy air had wrapped around his throat.

No one was on the street but the three of us, and the only sound was the clumsy pounding of the policeman's shoes on the asphalt. It felt as though the two men were putting on a play, and I was the only one in the theater.

The policeman broke the silence, yelling a single word I could not understand. The man turned, backpedaling, and threw a rock he clutched in his hand. It was pointless; they were too far apart for the rock to have done any damage.

As the man released the rock, the policeman dropped to one knee and fired a single shot. The crack of the pistol scared me, and my first thought was that my mother would think I had set off a firecracker. But then I realized what I was seeing. The man's legs were still pumping, but he looked as if someone had thrown a rope around his neck and jerked his torso to the ground.

Neighbors took their fans out of the windows and poked their heads through. They came to their front doors, then came running outside. I saw rivulets of sweat roll down the policeman's fat, flushed face like juice on an apple as he ran to where the man lay motionless. The crowd formed a few feet away, as though the people were afraid of catching whatever insanity had triggered this.

I had a clear view from where I was, so I stared down at the two of them, the man and the policeman. The heat



ILLUSTRATION BY SANDRA HENDLER

rising from the pavement made them look like watery figures in the distance, characters in a fevered dream.

An ambulance came, and then a police car, and another, and then a third. Each time, the sound of the siren approaching made me think for an instant that the ice

cream truck was near. After awhile, I decided to walk down toward the other end of the block, away from the flashing lights, the perverse crowd, the craziness. I went to the spot where the ice cream man usually stopped. I wanted

J U L Y

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
JUNE s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	AUGUST s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31					Independence Day
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

T R O P I C

1 • 9 • 8 • 7

1987
TROPIC

TOM SHRODER

By August, the heat is like an injury you keep reinjuring. You begin to worry that all that pain has got to add up to something bad. It bakes your paint job and cracks your vinyl dash. It melts the asphalt and lingers spitefully at night. Your sheets are damp.

Each day is the same, and the ocean is flat, windless, heavy — molten lead. It rains, but the rain brings no relief, and mold grows in your closets and you think it's growing between your toes and on your teeth. Flossing doesn't help either, and you begin to feel that whatever is growing isn't mold but malignancy.

And then you understand a hurricane, you understand the angry force that spawns it. The sun cauterizes the ocean, a hot poker on an open wound. Power hemorrhages from the sky day upon day. The threat is born, and the threat is fed.

It is a threat you have to wake up with in the morning and sleep with at night, like the missiles in the submarines swimming up the Gulf Stream, or the words "I want a divorce" in a bad marriage. And like all threats you live with, you forget about it until the sun pounds it into your brain again. Or if your head is deep in the sand, it takes the man on the 11 o'clock news.

Will you pull down the storm

This image is a collage of three distinct patterns. The left section features a light beige background with several open umbrellas in red, yellow, and blue, and several closed black umbrellas. The middle section is a vertical strip with a dark grey background, featuring a repeating pattern of the word 'TIT' in large, pink, stylized letters, with smaller black text and small white sheep figures interspersed. The right section has a dark navy blue background with a pattern of colorful sunglasses in red, yellow, and teal.

ILLUSTRATION BY PHILIP BROOKER

shutters that have been rusted in place for a decade? Will you pack your bags and roll up the carpets and leave for who knows where at 3 in the morning? Because if you believe what August has been trying to tell you, you shouldn't have built or bought a house here in the first place. And will your insurance cover the loss or even begin to? Will the causeways be clogged? Or just washed out to sea?

The heat of August threatens to go on in unchanging monotony to the end of time.

Until it starts to push the sea over the sea wall and threatens to change everything instead. Change beyond recognition or redemption. For the only point of the month is the Storm, or the threat of the Storm and to walk through the heat is nothing against walking with that dark threat on your back: a disaster with no one to blame; the kind of random, unpredictable horror we hope to eliminate with our vaccines and C-sections, V-E Day and the Neighborhood Crime Watch.

Back to Newsbreak: The watch has become a warning. It takes 12 hours to get out, and the storm is, or may be, only nine hours away. Since it is the middle of the night, you go to sleep with the radio on and wake up to blue skies and wind and another threat that was just a bad dream.

And now you've got a whole season, two seasons, of cool, but not too cool, breezes — six months to pretend that nothing is out there, nothing threatens. Six months to forget.



AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>JULY</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p>26 27 28 29 30 31</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>6 7 8 9 10 11 12</p> <p>13 14 15 16 17 18 19</p> <p>20 21 22 23 24 25 26</p> <p>27 28 29 30</p>					
2	3	4	5	6	7	1
9	10	11	12	13	14	8
16	17	18	19	20 Cleo, 1964	21	15
23	24	18 David, 1979	26	20 Betsy, 1965	21 Dora, 1964	22 Donna, 1960
30	31	25	26	27	28	29

TROPIC

1 • 9 • 8 • 7

1987

TROPIC

T. M. SHINE

We put the cover back on the pool and let the summer faint away. The vinyl rippled with air bubbles, and at each corner stood one of my four brothers. In strength, in blood, in individuality, we pulled fiercely, then slackened the tension. We did this over and over again, stretching the cover to its limits. I was holding up the middle, and directly across from me knelt my father, making the final adjustments. I was surrounded by the parts of me, the whole of me.

We released our grip but remained at our stations, waiting to see if our father had one last command. The heaviest leaves had already begun to fall on the taut vinyl, and the lightest rattled in the trees above us like a mobile of loose teeth ready to make the break.

In age, my brothers and I were becoming men. In form and confidence, we were the forever boys. Forever making up our minds, forever exchanging futures to no end, forever holding back. This month, this moment bringing the cold back to the North, had a dulling edge that sliced into the future. A struggle was about to begin. Each of us had abandoned school, the service, even the work force. We were a big shredded knot in the family tie.

As the temperature dropped and my father kept moving the cover an inch this way and an inch that way, I found myself in the last bit of sun. There is no comfort I know that is better than that patch of sun you find on an unexpectedly cold day. I had found these places before, at bus stops and phys-ed lineups. Always waiting for some kind of command.

But my father's voice never

uttered another command, and the forever boys never locked hands or heads but went our separate ways. And I don't mean one went to grapple with the Alaskan pipeline and one entered aerodynamics. I mean we went on to dig, to fight, to drink, to speed. To dissolve as a family.

The pool is blanketed and sealed for good now, the water dark and stagnant. I have moved to where the summer never ends, where there is no September. Where I can sweat while they remain frozen in different corners. Possibly their grips have altered, become looser or tighter. I've no idea, there is no communication because we've become so old and so faraway. And though I left them as a man, I remember them as children. That is when we lived.

I remember battling with billiard balls and the abuse my body could take when a cue ball was hurled into the small of my back, and I dropped for but an instant to fetch back my wind, breathing deep and pulling in the thick musty odor of damp concrete in an unfinished basement. Pain never felt so good nor so distinguishable from the pain I feel now.

Brotherhood ends. I would have thought that was a fat lie. It is not the past I yearn for; no free-for-all childhood fantasies. No, it is you, each of you individually, I miss. I am certain your parts have become the whole of me. They are in my voice, damn it, when I hear myself speak as you, Peter. And they're in my thoughts, Billy, when I sit silently for hours thinking and thinking and understanding less and less. And in my frustration, Chris, when I go to lash out at someone for no reason, and in my heart, Danny, when I try so hard I can't give up even when I

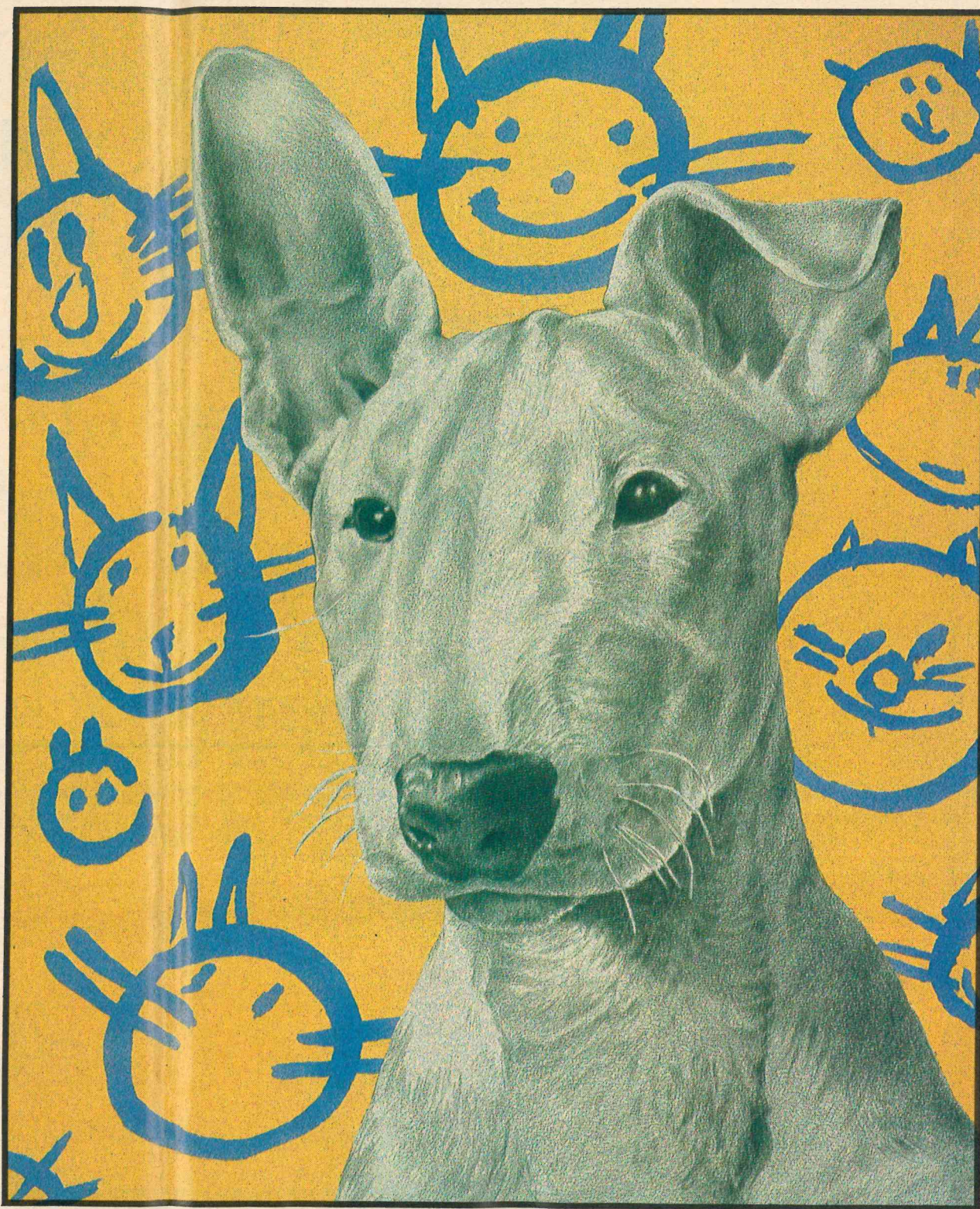


ILLUSTRATION BY LISA ADAMS

Sometimes the smell of a fire, or the infrequent cold front we receive, makes me feel that cue ball in my back or sense the quick chill of a basement window opening and deep brown leaves piling in. I

we joyfully threw away. I am each of you. We are each other, whether we like it or not. Please, do not mistake my words for meaning. Mistake my words for comfort, for cold breath and warm places to



S E P T E M B E R

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

		1	2	3	4	5
	Labor Day					
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Gold Coast Railroad Arts and Crafts Festival Begins				Rosh Hashanah		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
					<p>AUGUST</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1</p> <p>2 3 4 5 6 7 8</p> <p>9 10 11 12 13 14 15</p> <p>16 17 18 19 20 21 22</p> <p>23 24 25 26 27 28 29</p> <p>30 31</p>	<p>OCTOBER</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3</p> <p>4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p> <p>11 12 13 14 15 16 17</p> <p>18 19 20 21 22 23 24</p> <p>25 26 27 28 29 30 31</p>
27	28	29	30			



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1987

TROPIC

DAVE BARRY

By October, I was always seriously in love. This was in my youth, up in suburban New York. September was for surveillance, for checking out the girls, who always came back from summer vacation having changed radically for the better. But October was for getting seriously moonstruck, for sidling around the gym floor at the pep-rally dance, trying to look cool, trying to look like I wasn't beaming 125 secret glances per minute at Nina Sajor (this was 10th grade), who was the major blip — the only blip — on the radar screen of my mind. Not that I would ever tell her. Tell her what? "Nina Sajor, I love you. My life is meaningless without you. I sit two seats behind you in trigonometry."

You could fall deeply in love, remain in love for some time, eventually fall back out of love and never even *begin* to discuss this with the party you were in love with. In the October of eighth grade, I was in love with Barbara Smayda, and my best friend, Geoff Holmes, was in love with Patty Karro, who was Barbara Smayda's best friend, and Geoff and I spent hundreds of hours trying to figure out whether they liked us. We examined every tiny scrap of evidence, every look and giggle, like paleontologists trying to reconstruct a whole dinosaur from toe bones.

Finally, on Halloween day, Geoff, in an act of (to me) inconceivable courage, with me behind him, walked right up to Patty and Barbara in the cafeteria (Direct Contact!!) and *actually asked if it would be OK if we came over to see them that night*. And Patty said, and here I am quoting: "I guess." This was heavy. This was — we all knew it, in the back of our minds, even though nobody would ever say it — sort of a Date.

You talk about tension. As we made our way over to Patty's house that night, past mailboxes that had been hit by the traditional suburban Halloween toilet-paper storm, Geoff became very concerned about his breath and insisted on exhaling several times right at my nose. I told him it smelled



ILLUSTRATION BY HOWARD SCHWARTZBERG

OK to me, but we had to go back to his house for a bottle of Listerine, which we carried with us, swigging from it, and hid in the bushes near Patty's house.

Then we were at the front door, and there they were, right in front of us, giggling, the objects of our every waking thought, just us and them, and it was . . . well, you know what it was. It was standing around on the doorstep, with them giggling, us trying to break the outdoor record for sarcasm, and nobody letting on about anything.

But: I did walk Barbara Smayda home. Alone. Geoff arranged this, though I'm not sure how. All I know is the four

of us, formerly a shapeless giggling wise-ass mass, suddenly divided, amoebalike, into two distinct couples, and I was part of one of them, *with Barbara Smayda*. And although I did not kiss her good night, because Geoff was not there to ask her, I think she would have let me.

Walking home, carrying the Listerine, Geoff and I were elated, talking constantly, simultaneously, sharing our souls' contents, which I realize now were mostly cartoons, but which, at the time, seemed major and deep. It was weeks before I fell in love again. I still think Halloween is the most romantic night of the year.



O C T O B E R

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SEPTEMBER s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	NOVEMBER s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30					Yom Kippur Hispanic Heritage Festival Begins 3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Columbus Day	Baynanza Begins				Columbus Day Regatta Cuban Independence Day
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
						Miami Air Show Begins Halloween
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

TROPIC ON *Travel* SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1987

1987

TROPIC

MEG LAUGHLIN

"November is the trembling month."

— Herman Melville

It is a restless time. A 10-year-old halfway through her homework bolts out the front door before dark. She must go somewhere. She must be something. She gallops around the yard snorting and pawing like a horse. She knows how to whinny and she does. Around she goes, driven by the day, the light, the wind. It'll happen, her nerves tell her in a language she doesn't understand. She goes back in the house and turns to a word problem in her math book: A train is leaving Lansing, Michigan.

The night before, on Nov. 3, in downtown Miami, the guards at the community college had escorted a middle-aged man off campus. He had a dead cat in his mouth, holding its neck in his teeth. When the guards removed it, he hollered "Devil times!" Some of the Haitian students got upset. At 55th Street and Miami Avenue, the drums beat all night.

There ought to be a way to quell November yearnings — an 800 number to call, a way to fly with huge flocks of migrating birds, or a rustling forest to walk through. Instead, there are tomato plants to put in the ground, sweaters to be taken to the cleaners and homecoming games to watch.

On 25th Street and Collins, the Hare Krishnas dance at night. From the boardwalk looking west, you can watch them leaping and jingling in their building where the light is the color of November dusk. They dance until they drop.

Wallace Stevens said, "Death is the mother of beauty." A harvest moon, weighted and golden like a pink grapefruit, heralds the fall of things large and ripe. By 10 p.m. on this November night, the moon has dwindled to winter blue and the cloud scatter over the Everglades has traveled to the open sea.

You could move. You could put everything in storage except a suitcase of clothes and move somewhere, anywhere else, for the month. In the Grove, wild parrots squawk at sunrise.



ILLUSTRATION BY MARTY KRELOFF

On Eighth Street, people stand drinking café cubano until 2 a.m. on week nights. All over town, teen-agers hang out late at quick-stop groceries, while car alarms wail into the night.

Maybe it's the vague northern edge on twilight, or the flaunting sky, or the caressing breeze. Maybe it's the open windows, the bird calls in the late afternoon, or the rough sea. But something about November threatens and reassures at the same time. It's hard to sleep.

It was in November that we hung the parakeet cage on the outside porch and a gust of wind flipped it over, knocking the bottom out. A wild frenzy of chartreuse panicked skyward. It was about to rain, and the day was the color of highways and as heavy as an overpass. I cannot tell you how terrible and

wonderful it was to see that flash of life fly into the sky.

On November nights, if you live near a zoo, you know how much the lions roar. If you're a child, you might plan to take them ground beef and tame them, but if you're older, you will only imagine being trapped in impatience.

November dares you. The days are shorter. The air vibrates. The light begins to cool. You sense these changes, and you walk faster. And, perhaps, if you live in Lansing, Michigan, you will hop the train in the math book. But you don't. You live where you do, and the tremor in your soul is not enough to make you test your freedom. So you hop in your car instead and turn the radio up loud. Then, you head for Burdines where you buy the ideal holiday gift, which you take home for yourself.

N O V E M B E R

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Election Day				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Book Fair Begins		Veterans Day			
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Coconut Grove Waiters' Race				Thanksgiving Day		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30				<div> OCTOBER s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div>	<div> DECEMBER s m t w t f s 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 </div>

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1987

TROPIC

T. M. SHINE

One December, I found myself inhabiting an efficiency in Florida trying to find some kind of new beginning. I thought it was gutsy to leave home right before the holidays, but, when Christmas Eve came and I was homeless and wheelless, I started to panic and knocked on the door of my only neighbor. He was over 6½ feet tall and his skin color appeared to be black and blue. We talked about nothing, especially not about the holidays, and we laughed about an old girl's bicycle leaning up against the side of our building. He claimed it was his and that the tires were good. We both knew it was inevitable that if we didn't open up our souls soon one of us was going to have to get on that bicycle and go for beer. Instead we rode double, with me balancing on the hexagonal nuts behind the seat, my hands grasped around his neck like a first mate clinging to the mast for dear life. We ended up at a cell-sized bar with no windows, just widows, and everyone masturbating in one way or another. We left almost as soon as we arrived, and he invited me over for dinner. I watched him reach into the oven and pull out a TV dinner bare-handed. The entree looked like it had been in there for weeks. I told him I was full and asked to borrow the bike.



ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA JOHANSEN NEWMAN

I drew myself outside and started soloing. I knew nothing of the area. This bike was widening my horizons. I rode aimlessly until I heard people singing from what looked more like a Legion hall than a church, but I went inside. One family stood apart in the back, almost against the wall. There were two 8- or 9-year-old girls in emerald skirts and a father who looked like a king. I fit right in. When they went for Communion, I went for Communion. When the little girls' money jumped in the collection basket, my money dropped in. When the priest said, "We must rejoice," we said, "We must rejoice."

Returning on the bicycle, I was refreshed and pedaling to a different drum. I passed a too-brightly lit schoolyard where children of

all ages were kicking around a cross between a soccer ball and a hassock. As I moved past, it seemed the game was following me and then erratically chasing me. Instantly they were in front of me, behind me, and on both sides. The bike was seized, freezing it in motion. They looked at me in silence, not trying to scare me, though they did. They were all smaller than I, but I'd seen what even a couple of women could do when they ganged up on a man, let alone a pack of children. I understood. It was their bike. It looked like their bike. As they took possession, I thought about trying to explain it was stolen by a friend, but just giving it up seemed enough since I had gotten so much joy from it. I hoped it was good to them. too.

I thanked God they didn't try to shred me through the spokes.

When I got back to my room there was a Swanson's strapped to the door handle with a garrison belt and a note scrawled on half a paper bag. "Reheat" it said. I did just that, and I climbed up on the bed with my meal. Outside, I could hear raunchy music way in the distance. I felt safe being so far away from it, like a Marine 500 miles from the front. I had empty pockets and a room with railroad tracks running through the bathroom. It was a good time for believing again, and I put my hopes in the future, knowing it would take another year to find a real beginning, and another . . . and another . . . and another.



D E C E M B E R

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Hanukkah Begins	10	11	12
13	14 Orange Bowl Festival Begins	15	16	17	18 Christmas Day	19
20	21	22	23	24 Fiesta by the Bay King Mango Strut	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	<p>NOVEMBER</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30</p>	<p>JANUARY</p> <p>s m t w t f s</p> <p>1 2</p> <p>3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p> <p>10 11 12 13 14 15 16</p> <p>17 18 19 20 21 22 23</p> <p>24 25 26 27 28 29 30</p> <p>31</p>

RYDER SYSTEM

AT REST CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Reindeer herder
- 5 Emporia
- 10 Ending with convert
- 14 Kin to PDQ
- 18 Whiff
- 19 Obtained from oil
- 20 Vaunt
- 21 Affright
- 22 Depart secretly: 3 wds.
- 25 Lama-land
- 26 Make quite clear: 2 wds.
- 27 Settle in
- 28 Pond life
- 29 Hokey player
- 30 Trifling things
- 31 Bow or Barton
- 32 Prefix with cover
- 33 Quito cash
- 34 Craved
- 37 Do-nothing
- 40 Rest: 3 wds.
- 42 "— — Big Girl Now"
- 43 Serves
- 44 Loose change
- 46 Heeltaps
- 47 Glaswegian
- 48 "— — Clear Day"
- 49 Pause that refreshes
- 53 Extra
- 54 Stabilize: 2 wds.
- 56 Unfeeling
- 57 Fibber McGee's wife

- 58 Pandora's heritage
- 59 Odious ones
- 60 Reef makeups
- 61 Exchanges
- 62 Twenty per lira, once
- 63 As the crow flies
- 66 Torso part
- 67 Rests
- 69 From — — z
- 70 Leaf cutters
- 71 Sacred
- 72 On earth
- 73 At any time
- 74 — jogg
- 75 On leave
- 79 Inverno month
- 80 Possessions
- 82 — foot oil
- 83 Noncom
- 84 Russian range
- 85 Star of "The Great Caruso"
- 86 Reactionaries
- 89 Modifies
- 91 — firma
- 92 Maine's symbol: 2 wds.
- 94 Calcutta cash
- 95 Time off: 2 wds.
- 97 — — out
- (inconsistent)
- 98 Hautboy
- 99 Lounge seating
- 100 Biblical kingdom
- 101 "— of Our Lives"
- 102 Yield a bit
- 103 Food fish
- 104 Desertified

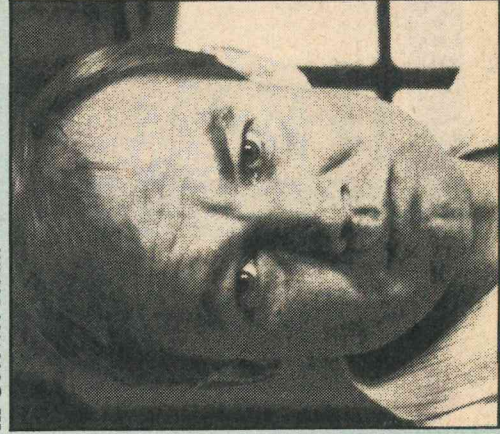
DOWN

- 1 Oodles
- 2 Make suitable
- 3 Card game
- 4 Intros
- 5 Dimwits
- 6 Adak man
- 7 Budget item
- 8 Twitching
- 9 Trashy
- 10 Beverage: 2 wds.
- 11 Crows
- 12 Valentine word
- 13 Meadow mama
- 14 Shades of gray
- 15 Academic break: 2 wds.
- 16 Square miles
- 17 Cossets
- 21 The Evangelist: 2 wds.
- 23 Aptitude
- 24 Orleans' river
- 28 ID info
- 30 A Campbell
- 31 Temerity
- 33 Excessively high
- 34 Corp. VIP
- 35 Atlanta campus
- 36 Commitment
- 37 Graven image
- 38 Cooked
- 39 Profitless time off: 3 wds.
- 41 Consecrate
- 44 Air-conditions
- 45 Switch settings
- 47 Chair back

- 49 Cuts
- 50 Polytechnique
- 51 Thin nails
- 52 Spokes
- 53 Rueful
- 55 George Eliot
- 57 Big game
- 59 Ginza locale
- 60 Dover domestic
- 61 Sub's ears
- 62 TV's Struthers
- 63 Birdfood
- 64 Ending with prank
- 65 Corrida cynosure
- 66 Torchere
- 67 Suable actions
- 68 Greek letter
- 71 Pitches
- 73 Beings
- 75 Was doubtful
- 76 Defenseless
- 77 Category
- 78 Perils
- 79 Plumy bird
- 81 Prettifies
- 83 Certain vocable
- 85 Bad buy
- 86 It preceded the baht
- 87 Make untenable
- 88 Madrid man
- 89 Gobi-like
- 90 The moon
- 91 TV component
- 92 Jewelry setting
- 93 Salingier girl
- 95 Weep
- 96 Energy

Q. Why is such a strong character actor as Klaus Maria Brandauer always cast in weak character roles?

A. "I'm not cast. It's my choice," snaps Brandauer, acclaimed as the most famous German-speaking actor in the world. "I don't think it's necessary to talk about angels. There are so few angels in the world — Mother Teresa or my grandmother, of course, and my mother. But all the others are more or less devils. We have to speak about our problems, our troubles, to help ourselves and the audience to think about them. And so I'm really interested in complex, difficult persons. If I'm doing a James Bond movie, that's different. That's a fairy tale, that's nothing. But I like to speak about opportunism, as I did in *Mephisto*, or about loyalism, as I did in *Colonel Redl*."



Q. Is Dr. Ruth Westheimer, America's favorite sexpert, really a doctor?

A. Born in Germany, and slipped out of the country when World War II started, Westheimer was enrolled in a school in Switzerland. She lost both her parents in concentration camps and was nearly crippled by an artillery shell in Palestine. She lived in poverty in Paris while attending the Sorbonne, where she earned the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in psychology. In Manhattan, she worked as a



housemaid while earning her master's in sociology from the New School for Social Research and a doctorate from Columbia University. Now, she hosts a cable television program, *The Dr. Ruth Show*, does TV commercials, has produced a sex videotape and is the author of three how-to books on sex. She also writes a newspaper column, has marketed a board game, lectures on college campuses, runs a private sex-therapy practice in New York City and was in the recent movie, *One Woman or Two*.

Q. How is street-wise, Brooklyn-born Lou Reed doing in his woodsy retreat in New Jersey?

A. The 43-year-old recording artist admits that it was difficult at first for him to adjust to the rural life, but now he's hooked on solitude. He says his neighbors had to tell him, for instance, about the benefits of rain. "Finally, they sat me down to tell me the facts of life," Reed chuckles, "such as there are farmers out there and they're getting killed by the drought. I became aware of what weather means, besides New Yorkers going away for the weekend. You don't hear any cars at night. You look up in the sky, and there are stars. It's strange. The closest I ever came to seeing stars before was the planetarium. It's kind of pathetic."



By William Lutwiniak

Last week's puzzle answers on page 31

PEOPLE ETC.

Person-to-Person

Address Your Response This Way:

Tropic Magazine
One Herald Plaza
Miami, FL 33132-1693

Ad Number

ATTRACTIVE JEWISH MALE- Age 30, 5'10", 190, successful attorney seeks above average female for world's greatest relationship. Phone and photo ensures immediate response. No. T-1427

CUTE AND CUDDLY- 25 year old man with a warm sense of humor seeks an attractive young lady with the same qualities for romantic evenings and fun conversation. How about it? No. T-1431

C & W SINGER- Attractive sincere & caring with great sense of humor seeks secure steady guy 38-50ish for lasting relationship No. T-1426

ACCOMPLISHED CONSIDERATE- Caring, unencumbered medical doctor, age 34, seeks accomplished, considerate, caring, unencumbered female counterpart. She should be honest, positive, energetic and open minded, positive toward sharing life. No. T-1416

MALE 5'8"- (Not bad looking) 175 lbs., Chilean Hillbilly. Enjoy dancing, movies, country music. Willing to set down if sensitive, passionate, trim female 40-50 believes in loyal monogamous relationship. Phone please. Promotes sincerity and honesty. No. T-1423

MARRIAGE MINDED- Handsome Jewish lawyer, 34, prestigious family, world traveler seeks extremely intelligent, sensitive, chaste, lovely young lady. No. T-1432

SINCERE HONEST- Professional male 29, 5'6", 135 lbs. Down-to-earth, non-smoking anti-yuppie. Enjoy working with my hands, crafts, jokes, laughing and the quiet life. Looking for loving woman 25-35 for no games serious relationship. No. T-1407

MALE EXECUTIVE- Financially and mentally secure, attractive, 5'11", athletic, 50's with no problems, would like to hear from a special L-A-D-Y with similar qualities, who loves to live life to the fullest. Photo, phone please. No. T-1314

MIAMI BEACH SABRA- Model 50 seeks sincere guy, financially secure, good humor-music & Yiddishkeit & that's the Emes. No. T-1435

GOOD LOOKING- Jewish dentist, 27, seeks intelligent, personable female, 25-30, who will give me more than just a good impression! Photo and phone please. No. T-1436

ISN'T IT TIME- You meet the best a lady with class and plenty of zest tennis and aerobics are just fine but I love a nice dinner and bottle of wine looking for a guy successful and Jewish good sense of humor, 28 to 32ish. Single, attractive and lots of fun. Send photo and phone if you think you're the one. No. T-1437

ATTRACTIVE SLENDER LADY- 40 seeks tall, righteous, healthy no-nang-ups, non-materialistic Anglo or Latin man. No. T-1438

MALE M.D. FORTIES- Varied interests, considered handsome seeks attractive lady under 40 for loving relationship. No. T-1439

SOUTH DADE PROFESSIONAL- 39 looking for that petite 30ish lady to share life ups & downs. Enjoy all of life's activities. Please don't take as long to answer this ad as I took to write it. Recent photo and phone please. No. T-1440

UPBEAT LADY- Attractive tall slim educated caring Jewish wants to meet sincere active man 60's who likes the arts travel. No. T-1441

REX HARRISON SUPER GENT- Age 45, ready to meet a wonderful lady of achievement, charm and beauty. Let's start off the New Year together for super special dining and theater. No. T-1434

HAPPY FUN BRIGHT- Independent woman, early forties, seeks man who loves music, has sense of humor, and adventure; for concerts, trips to Keys. No. T-1442

ARE YOU- The man finally ready to take a chance on developing that meaningful relationship you know would complete your life? This very attractive divorced Jewish female could be the right woman for you. I'm honest caring, sexy, fun loving yet sensitive, if you're 40 to 50 let's meet. No. T-1348

GENEROUS- Sophisticated, laughing man, early 50's (young) with high life style seeks relationship with beautiful, tall, gal, good figure, 23-35, who wants fun and commitment. Photo and phone. No. T-1401

10 GOALS SET- 9 goals met. Can't reach last one alone. You're a high quality man, strong yet gentle, self-assured but not at all self-involved, open with feelings, have integrity. You're 36-46, non-smoking, tall, nice-looking, don't know if from zebra, Me, I'm down-to-earth, Jewish female, 38, professional. By nature, I'm sensitive, artistic, and have a loving heart. By good fortune, I'm bright, exotically attractive, 5'5", with a trim, curvy figure. I'm called refreshing, sensual, a loyal friend. I'd like to parent a child, yours or ours. I'm passionate about music and good communication. Please send proof of intelligence and sense of humor. No. T-1445

JUST BROKE UP- With my boyfriend and feeling a little lost. I'm a pretty, slim, financially secure Boca lady, 36, who likes books, music, art, flowers, dancing, laughing and children. I'm looking for a kind, responsible, intelligent man, successful but not seeking status. No. T-1444

DISPLACED YANKEE- Female misses seasons, hugs, companionship, Fenway. Professional, 32, warm educated, athletic, funny & alone. Looking for laughter, honesty, intelligence & seafood. No. T-1445

HANDSOME PROFESSIONAL- White male, 36, 5'7", 135, blue eyes, well built would like to meet sensitive, soft, romantic professional female, if you want to meet someone special, send me a thoughtful note with phone and photo. No. T-1446

MR MOM- Seeks professional Ms Mom for possible role reversal. Young 50, secure retired airline captain, custody of fine boys 6 and 4. Tennis, golf, snow ski, flying, chess, BA degree, WASP, sensitive and caring. Free of smoke, disease, drugs and booze. If you are widowed or divorced, alone but sociable with children, let's write and talk. No. T-1447

SPECIAL BISEXUAL GUY- 49 seeks gal, 30-45, for special relationship. Please send replies to. No. T-1404

SENSITIVE- Latin male 32, 5'10", financially independent likes to bike beach travel dancing dining & run the Grove searching for single female 30-38 athletic sensual & open minded that would love the company of a caring & understanding person to enjoy life with. Phone note No. T-1448

SINGLE HANDSOME MALE- 28 Jewish muscular tall successful, I enjoy art music travel & dining, seeks physically attractive female 23-29. Send phone. No. T-1449

RESPECTABLE ATTRACTIVE- Tan complexion, dark eyed brunette lady, late thirties, divorced after a long and single marriage. Intelligent, honest, sensitive, caring secure non-smoker. Romantic, Christian values. Likes sports, dancing, theater and travel. Seeks special gentleman with similar attributes 38-52, 5'10"-6'3" for a monogamous relationship with the ultimate intent of marriage. Must be able to commute to the Key West area. Only serious individuals need respond. Please tell me about yourself. Phone number and photo if available. No. T-1450

ATTENTION CINDERELLAS- Between the ages 22 and 30, if you are 5'6" or under, slim, and adventurous. Contact Prince Charming, who is a 30 year old handsome, professional, trim Jewish prince. Wishing for the right princess to fit the glass slipper and ride off into the sunset for a happily ever after ending. No. T-1451

ROMANTIC- Good looking male 24 blonde blue eyes 5'7" 145 loves the beach movies dining & just all around fun is looking for a female 20-35 for secure relationship who loves warm affection hugs kisses & lots of fun. Photo phone or note No. T-1452

STABLE WHITE MALE- 34 years old, handsome, good natured, sincere, seeks lady with same characteristics for serious relationship. No. T-1453

SMELL THE FLOWERS- Along the way, lady (50) with zest for life and better than 20 25 year olds seeking man with same. No. T-1455

DREAMING- Single 24 year old professional looking for the woman of his dreams. She is a Latin, 23-33, attractive, single or divorced, children okay. She is affectionate, loving, and like to travel. If you think you are the one, send a note, photo, and phone. Looking for a long term commitment. No. T-1456

PROFESSIONAL MAN 40-6'2" 209 lbs, like to meet lady 30-45 who is non-smoker, kind, honest, and college graduate. Please send photo. No. T-1457

MODEL STUDENT- Jewish American Princess type wants tall professional 20-28 year. Want to enjoy the finer things in life. Send photo & phone. No. T-1458

TO ORDER TROPIC PERSON-TO-PERSON ADS:

Minimum four lines, 32 letters and spaces per line. Rate is \$7.00 per line for one insertion; \$5.50 per line for two or more insertions. No abbreviations allowed. Last ten spaces are for ad number. All ads are COD 4 weeks before publication. Ad

numbers include forwarding of mail up to six weeks after ad has appeared.

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Miami, FL 33132-1693

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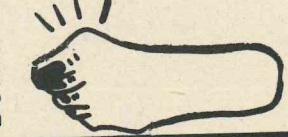
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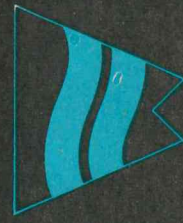
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